

Investigator's Research has Far-Reaching Impact

VA often claims that its research benefits the American community at large and a recently published study in Neurology proved just that point.



Dr. Joy Taylor, lead author and assistant director of the Aging Clinical Research Center (ACRC), a joint project of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System and Stanford Medical School, studied pilot performance in flight simulators over three years. The result in a snapshot? Experienced, older pilots showed remarkably stable performance over time.

The study looked at pilots between the ages of 40 and 69 over a three year period. Overall, pilots in their 60s improved on average over the three years, while those in their 40s and 50s declined. Younger pilots still did better, but the study suggests that healthy older workers with the most expertise don't necessarily become less effective as they get nearer to retirement.

The research was published at an opportune time, as the Federal Aviation Administration was looking at changing the mandatory retirement age from 60 to 65. Dr. Taylor's research was picked up by local, national and international news media, including USA Today, Jim Lehrer Newshour, MSNBC, Medscape, Scientific American, Neurology and Neurosurgery, HealthDay News, Fox Channel 2, Canadian Globe and Mail and the San Francisco Chronicle, with more to come.

Dr. Taylor worked on the study with Dr. Jerome Yesavage, ACRC director, pilot, and protocol PI. According to Dr. Taylor, "For many years, it's been known some cognitive abilities really start to decline after



about the age of 25. The question is, how much does it matter in the real world if you are a little slower performing on some cognitive test?"

A few milliseconds may not hamper effectiveness at a job that expects life-or-death decisions to be made not only quickly, but more importantly, accurately and based on prior knowledge, the study showed.

According to the San Francisco Chronicle, "Other studies have tried to compare older and younger pilots, but the Palo Alto researchers appear to be the first careful attempt to track the same group of pilots over a period of time."

An editorial that accompanied the study said the research had implications "well beyond aviation."

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A Word From Our Director



**Elizabeth Joyce Freeman, Director
VA Palo Alto Health Care System**

The VA experienced another massive information security breach in February 2007. VA's top leadership are understandably concerned that this incident is a signal some VA managers and employees do not yet understand the vital importance of keeping VA employee and patient data secure. The latest breach is estimated to cost tens of millions of dollars. While some

portion of these funds will go toward further information security safeguards, a portion will be expended simply due to the negligence of an employee who did not take the charge of protecting confidential information seriously. Secretary Nicholson has said these breaches must stop and I agree wholeheartedly.

It is our privilege to serve our nation's veterans. VA is fortunate to have some of the most sophisticated health information systems in health care. We are justifiably proud of our research. It is markedly improving the lives of today's and tomorrow's veterans. We must improve in our efforts to use clinical and research information in a safe and protected fashion. This is the responsibility of every employee, volunteer, contractor, consultant, student and every other person who has access to our data. Each person is personally accountable for protecting this data. No one is allowed access to our data systems without first successfully passing an information security and privacy exam. No person given an access code can claim, "I did not understand my responsibilities for protecting patient and employee data."

I recently asked each service to designate points of contact (POCs) to receive training to assist the service chief in understanding information security vulnerabilities in their work areas at all sites within their service. The POCs were trained on March 8, 2007, by our Privacy Officer and Information Security Officer. The VA Office of Information and Technology is developing checklists we will soon use throughout VAPAHCS. VHA Research Service has already instituted a certification process for research investigators. We are and will complete these checklists as mandated.

My admonition to all of you and to everyone to whom we allow access to our data is that information security protection is your personal responsibility. While the service POC, the Service Chief, the Chief of Staff, Associate Director and Director all stand ready to assist in whatever ways are needed to protect our data, all of us have to understand and accept this responsibility. If you have concerns about the ways you personally store or transport data, act immediately to get assistance. Contact one of the Information Security Officers, Phil Wong, Perry Ungson or Ray Salazar, or the Privacy Officer Ana Marie Vitente. Do not assume someone else will take action for you. Do not assume it is someone else's responsibility. It is yours and you will be held personally accountable for your actions if they result in an information security breach.

Information security breaches cost the VA substantial financial sums – but we pay an even higher price in the loss of faith we experience from our veterans and stakeholders. I implore all of you to take every effort to ensure everyone understands the gravity of this charge to protect data - and complies immediately. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth J. Freeman".

**Elizabeth Joyce Freeman
Director**

Corpsman, Doctor, Volunteer:

Don Barker Puts His Passion to Work for Injured Marines

The Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund has been exceptionally helpful to the families of Marines and Sailors who have been seriously wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since its inception in May 2005, the Fund had given grants totaling \$5.6 million to provide assistance to families so that they could be beside their loved ones.

The Fund has a marvelous group of volunteers who work at the various VA and military hospitals to make sure families of the wounded get the financial help they need. The volunteer at the Palo Alto VA is Don Barker, who spends a great deal of his time talking to the wounded Marines and their families.

Don's selfless devotion to duty likely stems from his background. Don joined the National Guard in Nebraska at age 16. When



Don Barker, second from left, joins Marines Jason Poole, John Potter, Angel Gomez and AP Apineru.

the wounded started arriving at the Palo Alto VA hospital, Don volunteered to help the hospital and then began working with the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund.

We salute you, Don Barker!

the Korean War broke out, Don joined the Navy which assigned him as a Corpsman, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines. He was transferred to the 1st Medical Battalion where he saw more wounded Marines than he thought possible. He then transferred to Japan where he volunteered to work at the Air Force Hospital in Nagoya. Don left the navy in 1954 and went back to college where he earned his degree and entered medical school.

Don retired in 2000 after 38 years as a physician in the Bay Area. When the nation went to war in Iraq, and

Modesto Clinic Remodeling Improves Patient Care

The VA Palo Alto Health Care System has completed a major remodel of the ambulatory care suite at the VA Modesto Clinic. The changes will help the primary medicine care team improve the veterans health care experience.

Using similar design measures to those employed in the new VA Stockton Clinic, VA put together a suite of offices and exam rooms for the provider and nursing. Each provider is given an office and two exam rooms. Nursing is provided an intake room, called a pod, to service the veterans from two providers.

The combination of rooms eliminates multiple interruptions in the delivery of care. The provider doesn't have to wait for a veteran to be roomed in an exam room. Nursing is freed from multiple logging in and out of our electronic record and can screen the patient's health care issues in private. The time captured can be reinvested in more direct care of the veteran.

Veterans used to arrive early in the morning to get their blood drawn hoping to avoid long waits and standing room only. Now the VA Modesto Clinic has two large draw stations and a larger waiting area to handle the early morning rush. Our phlebotomists have been seen smiling a little more.



Members of the Modesto Team: Front row, left to right: Kyeong Park MD, Karen Blackmore RN, Rebecca Evans LVN, Victoria Calibro LVN, Gary Peichoto RNP, Anita Prabhu MD, Debra Gifford RN. Back row, Alvin Zachariah MD, Pamela Polk RN, William Bishop MD, Calvin Reckord MD, Veronica Pineda, Phlebotomist.

Dr. Doug Owens Receives VA's Under Secretary's Award for Health Sciences Research



VA Palo Alto investigator Douglas K. Owens, M.D., M.S., will receive VA's most prestigious award for research, The Under Secretary's Award for Health Sciences Research. Dr. Michael Kussman, under secretary for health, will present the award on February 22, along with a personal cash award of \$5,000, and up to \$50,000 annually (for up to three years) in VA research funds to augment Dr. Owens' peer reviewed research funding.

For 20 years, Dr. Owens brought scientific distinction to VA through his health services research. Dr. Owens' research, characterized by both methodological rigor and remarkable breadth, provided major contributions to understanding factors that affect the health of veterans which led to significant improvements in the quality of VA health care services.

Dr. Owens previously received two HSR&D Career Development Awards, and he has brought prestige to VA health services research through his leadership in the health care community. His first

Career Development Award funded early work on HIV research and his second award funded research on the cost effectiveness of strategies to prevent sudden cardiac death.

Dr. Owens is now one of the leading scholars nationally in these areas. Currently, Dr. Owens is active in research on screening and managing HIV/AIDS, and it is a prominent example of his use of sophisticated methods and clinical insight to generate knowledge on a health issue of clear importance to veterans.

Although early identification of HIV infection is critical from both clinical and public health perspectives, Dr. Owens found that many veteran patients at risk for HIV infection are not tested at all. Dr. Owens determined that routine HIV screening in health care settings, even in relatively low-prevalence populations, is cost-effective, and he recommended that such programs should be expanded. These findings, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, were sent to all physicians in VA and played an important role in the CDC's reevaluation of its HIV screening recommendations.

Congratulations Dr. Owens for serving VA Palo Alto, veterans and our nation with such distinction.

Rudolf Moos Earns 2006 Dan Anderson Research Award

Rudolf H. Moos, Ph.D., a VAPAHCs senior research scientist, recently won the 2006 Dan Anderson Research Award. Sponsored by the Butler Center for Research at Hazelden, one of the largest private rehabilitation centers in the world, the award honors a single published article by a researcher who has advanced the scientific knowledge of addiction recovery.

Moos earned the award for his study, "Rates and predictors of relapse after natural and treated remission from alcohol use disorders," published in the 2006 journal *Addiction*. The study found that individuals with alcohol use disorders who participated in treatment or AA within the first year of recognizing their problem were more likely to stay sober for the long term than individuals who didn't receive help via treatment or AA.

"I'm surprised and honored to receive this award," said Moos, who teamed with his wife, Bernice S. Moos, on the study. "I had heard of the Dan Anderson Research Award and the many esteemed honorees from the past. I am very grateful for the recognition."

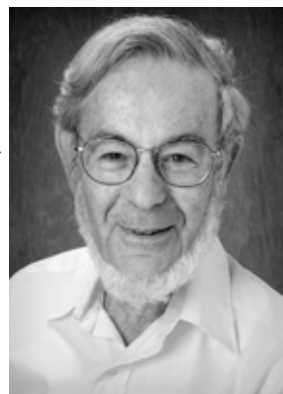
In his study, Moos compared three-year remission rates and subsequent 16-year relapse rates for a group of individuals who entered treatment or AA within the first year of seeking help and for a group of individuals that similarly recognized their alcohol

problem but did not get help from treatment or AA.

After three years, 62.4% of participants who received first year help remitted (or stayed sober), while only 43.4% of the group that got no help remitted. After 16 years, the group that had gone into remission showed that 60.5% of the no-help group relapsed, while 42.9% of the remitters who got help relapsed.

"A difference of 15 to 20 percent is very significant," said Moos. "Our study indicates that if an individual recognizes an alcohol problem and gets into treatment or AA relatively soon after that, then they are much more likely to be remitted after three years and to stay remitted after 16 years."

"Our findings on the benefits of relatively rapid entry into treatment and/or AA support the value of strengthening the referral process," said Moos. "Those first-responders who do the initial assessments need to be aware of the important role they can play up front."



Vision Rehabilitation for Polytrauma Patients

Recent findings show that up to 74% of our polytrauma patients reported a vision complaint with visual impairment confirmed in 38% of all cases. Visual impairment ranges from photosensitivity and refractive correction to total blindness in 8% of the cases. The type of injury (blast from IED or RPG, vehicle accident, bullet wound, falls, etc.) significantly affected whether the patient would have visual impairment. Blast related injuries produced 52% of visual impairment cases versus 20% from other causes, which shows that blast injuries more than doubled the risk of visual impairment.

Vision plays a critical role in polytrauma rehabilitation since walking, reading, face recognition, orientation, balance, and many other daily activities derive most of their sensory input from the visual system. It is estimated that 70% of all sensory processing is affected by information from the two eyes. Proper rehabilitation

in orientation and mobility, activities of daily living, and low vision help restore independence for those with visual impairments.

The combination of vision and brain injury in polytrauma patients presents an unprecedented challenge for rehabilitation facilities. Undetected visual impairment can be masked by cognitive and communicative deficits, post-traumatic stress, or other conditions common in polytrauma patients. Uncompensated vision loss may impair the ability of other therapists to provide optimum rehabilitation. It is vitally important that vision impairment be detected at the earliest possible time in the rehabilitation process.

VAPAHCS recently purchased new Neuro-Vision Technology equipment which can help assess and train our patients with vision related deficits:

- Assesses visual deficits through exercises using a variety of light patterns on a panel
- Assesses processing deficits by having patients compare light patterns of the left side vs. right side of the panel
- Assesses peripheral vision loss
- Assesses the speed and accuracy of a patients' visual scanning pattern
- Assesses/trains a patient to use head and eye movements to locate a target
- Assesses/trains patients with possible visual neglect or visual field loss to scan fully into their affected visual field

VAPAHCS systematically addresses vision related deficits in the Polytrauma Care Center (PRC). We are the only PRC located in a medical center that also provides comprehensive vision rehabilitation services. VAPAHCS is currently participating in a Polytrauma eye research and treatment study whose findings will shortly be published. Data from this study can be used by other medical and PRC centers so that more patients will receive important vision services as part of their overall treatment.



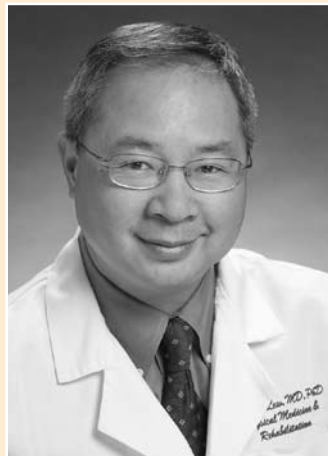
Paul Koons, blind rehabilitation specialist, works with Air Force Sgt. Angie Stratz to gain an understanding of her cognitive impairments from a brain injury that may impact her vision. The tool, Neuro Vision Technology, was developed in Australia and is used both for testing and training people with brain injuries.

New Congressman Visits Livermore Division

Congressman Jerry McNerney (D-11-CA) meets former Army Sgt. Mariella Mason on a recent visit to the Livermore Division. Mason was severely injured in Iraq and has been at the Palo Alto Health Care System for nearly a year, first on the traumatic brain injury unit and then Livermore. Congressman McNerney recently won the 11th District seat, which was previously held by Richard Pombo, and is a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. Congressman McNerney also testified at the final CARES public meeting in February. His visit to Livermore included meeting many veterans and staff. He was very warmly received and seemed quite impressed with the facility.



Dr. Henry L. Lew Recognized Nationally by the Association of Academic Physiatrists



The Association of Academic Physiatrists (AAP) recently announced that VA Palo Alto doctor, Henry L. Lew, MD, PhD, was the 2007 recipient of the Young Academician Award. This award honors an academic physiatrist who has demonstrated outstanding performance in the areas of teaching, research and/or administration. The nominee must have an academic rank of associate professor or less. Dr. Henry L. Lew is currently director of clinical research of the PM&R Service and staff physician at VAPAHCS and Clinical Associate Professor at Stanford University School of Medicine. In 2000, Dr. Lew joined the VAPAHCS and served as the Medical Director of the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center until 2003, when he received his first VA Rehab R&D award. He then became the Director of Clinical Research of their PM&R Service in 2006. To date, he has published 50 scientific articles, 5 book chapters, and has been awarded 4 federal grants. Clinically, Dr. Lew dedicates the majority of his time to caring for wounded soldiers, especially those who were injured in this current war on terrorism. His research focuses on various deficits related to TBI and musculoskeletal disorders, as well as improving the quality of care received by the veterans and service members. He has written two Guest Editorials for JRRD (2005 and 2006) to highlight the importance of caring for our wounded soldiers, and he is currently working as Guest Editor on a special issue for Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development (JRRD), summarizing the work of the VA Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers (PRCs), as well as exemplary studies from clinicians and researchers affiliated with the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC).



National News



VA VISION CARE

VA announced in January 2007 that more than a million visually impaired veterans will receive enhanced health care services under a reorganization of VA's vision rehabilitation services. VA will make approximately \$40 million available during the next three years to establish a comprehensive nationwide rehabilitation system for veterans and active duty personnel with visual impairments. The system will enhance inpatient services and expand outpatient services throughout the 1,400 locations where VA provides health care. Under the reorganization plan, each of VA's 21 regional networks—called Veterans Integrated Service Networks, or VISNs—will implement a plan to provide eye care to veterans with visual impairments ranging from 20/70 to total blindness. Basic low-vision services will be available at all VA eye clinics, and every network will offer intermediate and advanced low-vision services, including a full spectrum of optical devices and electronic visual aids. VA's 10 existing inpatient blind rehabilitation centers will continue to provide the Department's most intensive eye care programs.

DOD-VA RECORD TRANSITION

After nearly a decade of attempting to exchange information stored in separate systems, VA and DoD have agreed to join together to establish an updated electronic health records system. While details remain sparse, DoD announced that the two agencies would jointly

acquire and use a new in-patient electronic health system. The VA developed its current system, known as VistA, in 2001. Work began on the Pentagon's Armed Forces Health Longitudinal Technology Application, or AHLTA, in 1997. Both systems are in need of an upgrade. The agencies have agreed to study their clinical processes and requirements and assess the benefits and the potential effects on their timelines and costs before making a final decision on a joint acquisition strategy for the upgraded system.

VA OBESITY INITIATIVE

By the start of Healthy Weight Week (21-27 January), more than 41,000 veterans were participating in a weight management program designed by VA to reduce the high rates of illness caused by obesity. According to Secretary Nicholson there is a growing epidemic of obesity and diabetes in the nation, especially among veterans. Of the veterans VA cares for 70% are overweight and one in five has diabetes, both of which increase the risk of many diseases. VA's Managing Overweight Veterans Everywhere (MOVE!) program not only encourages veterans enrolled in VA care to get in shape but also offers information to family members and anyone trying to lose weight through an Internet link. VA started MOVE! to encourage veterans to increase their physical activity and improve their nutrition.

VAPAHCS Scores Big with CFC

For the second year in a row, VAPAHCS has been awarded the Sector Chair Award from the Greater San Francisco Bay Area Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). CFC is the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign, with more than 300 CFC campaigns throughout the country and internationally to help to raise millions of dollars each year. Pledges made by Federal civilian, postal and military donors during the campaign season support eligible non-profit organizations that provide health and human service benefits throughout the world. This year, the Greater San Francisco Bay Area CFC raised over four million dollars!



Director Lisa Freeman proudly turns over a check for \$150,548.00 to the local Bay Area CFC Coordinator. For the second year in a row, VAPAHCS was awarded the Sector Chair Award from the Greater San Francisco Bay Area Combined Federal Campaign (CFC).

Despite the many demands on our resources, we at VAPAHCS have seen an unwavering commitment to the causes that need

our support. Donors who contributed more than \$2,000 this year increased by 100%! The Central Valley CFC was especially active, with an over 285% increase in donation dollars from last year.

The VAPAHCS could not have seen such achievement without the hard work of our key workers. Their diligence and commitment to distributing materials, collecting donations and answering questions resulted in a total system wide donation of more than \$150,000. We all appreciate their willingness to be a part of this important project!

To top off all of our success this year, the winner of the CFC raffle, for which the prize was a flat screen television, was our own Shirley Salom-Bail, a social worker at the Menlo Park Division. All Greater Bay Area and Silicon Valley donors were automatically entered in the raffle.

2006 Emerging Leaders Development Program (ELDP)

The ELDP is a core component of Veterans Health Administration's (VHA's) succession planning and workforce development initiatives. Our local program graduates completed a rigorous academic program which included attending onsite and off-site workshops with ELDP participants from VA Medical Center, San Francisco, and VA Northern California Health Care System.

Our ELDP participants were also required to complete a series of independent learning assignments and a service-level customer service project. Each of our ELDP participants was also required to make a formal presentation about his or her customer service project. Their shared experiences and knowledge gained during the ELDP will serve our graduates well in their respective leadership paths.



Congratulations to ELDP Graduates: Seated, left to right: Jackie Bevins, ELDP coordinator; Jerome Green; Beth Pittman; Jodi Bisely; Deena Bunzel; Edith Lombard; Virginia Ulanimo; Gasling Sweeney. Standing: Tony Fitzgerald, assistant director; John Sisty, associate Director; Lisa Freeman, Director; Jim Canfield; Jimmie Witcher; Tim Chin; Vickie Baker; Tim Langford.

EMPLOYEE NEWS

New Employees

Retirees

Acq & Mat Mgmt Svc
Michael McIntosh
Margie Nicholls-Goslow
Sean A. Ryan

Anesthesiology
Karin L. Klika
Anne Marie Spence
Dennis Carl Watson

Blind Rehab Svc
Alison L. Chapin
Laura Koehler
Nicole L. Sandlan
Michael B Wor

Business Office
Luis E. Blandon
Randy A. Carroll
Josefina Duran
Joseph M. Klimas
Jeanette M. Mazariego
John W. Pelley
Grace Red
Juan T. Selles
Benjamin J. Shuford III
Heather L. Tosta
Emilienne Traore
Lisa A. Williams

Canteen Svc.
Amor F. Abrigo
Gwen J. Morgan

Chief of Staff
Christine Bellotti
Raymundo D. Calija
Hank H. Chen
Hareld D. Craig
Alice Tsoi
Irene H. Zou

Domiciliary Care
Mark A. Branch

Engineering
Steven A. Elliott

Environmental Mgmt. Svc.
Scott Andrews
James H. Davis
Richard Rojas
Timothy Valley

Fiscal Svc.
Alexandra N. Kurtz
Ya Wen Liang
David T. Yee

Human Resources
Apollo I. Baldias
Rosalind A. Calacal
Julie M. Haralson
Euray C. Kwong
Sarah N. Mugler
Martha R. Torpey

Medical Svc.
Abigail C. Abar-Calica
Neelam M. Bhalla
Sanra L. Hendrickson
Jeff M. Hsing
Robert L. Jack
Nayer Khazeni
Sandy S. Lai
Michael A. Newdow
Khanh D. Nguyen
Alena Sipalova
Jennifer T. Somsouk
Mitchell J. Wong

Nursing
Norma O. Abad
Rowena S. Adkins
Rowena T. Anselmo
Maureen C. Auld
Jennifer Y. Battung
Kathryn J Baker
Christian Burgos
Debra A. Bush
Maria Cristina M. Dolor
Lisa M. Flores
Steven Edward Fraga
Eugenia L Goyeneche
Tracey Gulley
Bonnie D. Hanley
Valerie Y. Hardy
Sushma Hinduja
Violeta M. Ignacio
Sally A. Johnson
Melvin Jordon Jr.
Lisa C. Khieu
Leslie Kensill
Maria Andrea Lauron
Darice L. Lewis
Barbara J. Louis
Michael A. Manalastas
Shartana L. Nandan

Nursing (cont'd)
Gloria Q. Natividad
Kiet T. Nguyen
Cynthis C. Nieves
Luzviminda J. Parker
Filipina T. Payumo
Bonita Ann Peiffer
Rossina R. Perez
Rosalie U. Romua
Nicole R. Schwartz
Clinton H. Sikon
Serra Elizabeth Smith
Nora S. Sy
Remedios M. Tenorio
Teresa L. Traylor
Sharon Ann Trost
Moges A. Yimer

Nutrition & Food Svc
Arthur Lee Ford
Nicole N. Haggins
Kenneth A Hoover
Norman A. Solorzano
Jade B. Strobel
Office of Director
Miriam A. Hoereth
Path & Lab Svc.
Erlinda C. Bunao
Luis F. Fajardo
Shehnaz Kazi
Yun S. Kim
Mai X. Le
John V. Mathew
Phuong Hoang Nguyen
Alicia Rodriguez-Vasquez

Pharmacy
Suzanne A. Beasley
Carlin S. Haston
Lorinda Mestaz
Judy H. Nguyen
Jacolyn A. O'Donnell
Emily C. Rosales
Traci Y. Uyeoka

Phys Med & Rehab Svc.
Thera L. Hampton
Randy M. Naku
Kimberly M. Trosin

Police
Jesse J. Gillespie
Edward Lichner
Luis R. Nardi
Daniel Urteaga

Prosthetics Svc.
Christopher M. Chandler

Psychiatry Svc.
Mina Hah
Miki H. Kwan
David D. Jacques
Shannon L. Robinson

Psychology Svc.
Ziya Vedat Dikman

Radiology Svc.
Jared C. Browning
Gloria L. Hwang
Jinsoo A. Keyoung
Shreyas Vasanawala

Recreation Svc
Carmel A. Corr
Wendy N. Sato
Richard K. Smith

Research Svc.
Leonor L. Ayyangar
Parisa Gholami
Naquell S. Johnson
Christine M. Murray
Ann M. Nomoto
Yoko Ogawa
Colleen M. Scheitrum
Fadi M. Tayim

Social Work Svc
Bernie Loaisiga
Renee Wagner

Surgery Svc.
Teresa La Masters
Mitra Meister
Fayeza F. Mullamithawala
Joseph R. Raviv
Brian F. Worden

Spinal Cord Injury
Diana L. Galler

VISN Director Office
Nicholas J. Kluch

Acq & Mat Mgmt Svc
Gerald King (20)

Audiology
Elouise Mackety (19)
Linda Rosen (20)

Blind Rehab Svc
Noreen Kruger (26)

Business Office Svc
Corrie Jordon (21)
Junius White (19)

Canteen Svc.
Bettie Montgomery (44)
Romana Wilson (5)

Chief of Staff
Charlotte Flynn (21)

Engineering Svc
Roy Davenport (24)

Environmental Mgmt Svc
Carlos Galavez (17)
Leo Pasco (45)
Sharon Tate (37)

Extended Care Svc
James Hawkins (15)

Director's Office
Carmencito Lozano (24)
Ken Pinto (19)

Engineering Svc
Lucky Johnson (42)

IRMS Svc
Lina Terlaji (23)

Medical
Thomas Richard Blair (26)

Nursing Svc
Flordeliz Ancheta (26)
Patricia Arrequin (24)
Angelita Bagon (28)
Edarlina Dacio (25)
Dirk Decoursey (25)
Marilyn Douglas (16)
Melvin Henry Jr. (30)
Charles Pullen (39)
Ann Marie Solberg (14)
Dawn Stewart (30)

Nutrition & Food Svc
Darcy Daley (24)
Isaac Sharp (14)

Path & Lab Svc
Shirley Gracie (29)
Mitchell Pippin (14)

Pharmacy Svc
Ely Huang (19)

Psychology Svc
Richard (Rick) Bale (35)

Radiology Svc
Stanford Rossiter (29)

Research Svc
Lenore Sheridan (21)

Spinal Cord Injury Svc
Betty Bell (20)

A Rose By Any Other Name

As you exit past the Chapel in Building 101, you'll encounter an intoxicating fragrance and discover a sea of vibrant colors from plants called Angel Face, Lover's Lane, Double Delight, and Tahitian Sunset. A gazebo area with benches provides a tranquil opportunity to relax. It's the VA Palo Alto Memorial Rose Garden. Officially dedicated in June 2006, the garden contains over 240 roses honoring the memory of loved ones including veterans, employees or relatives of employees.



Roses thrive under the care and guardianship of some very dedicated volunteers.

How did this beautiful rose garden begin? Initially, former Chief Chaplain Ed Bastille planted a beautiful red rose for the souls of 9/11 developed by The American Rose Society called -- 9/11/2001. After that, Miriam White, a WWII Wave and

Chaplain's Office volunteer asked, "Why not have a memorial rose garden?" Chaplain Bastille agreed and asked Gene Resnick to design it. In 2003, Gene planted the roses and now Elizabeth Foree, Lab Service, utilizes the pruned petals for potpourri in the Country Store.



Pruning, planting, fertilizing are just some of the many steps in creating a beautiful rose garden

Aneliese Resnick, the first coordinator, cajoled many a rose supplier and Mamie Zimbelman and Jerry Georgette, RN, selected, designed, and purchased the 100 new roses planted around the gazebo in 2006.

Several roses have special meaning for veterans. The Peace Rose, christened the day that the Berlin wall fell, played a unique role in world peace. The Veterans' Honor Rose was dedicated in Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day 1999. The Honorable Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., M.P.H. and creator of the rose commented, "I wanted to create a commemorative rose to signify the pride and gratitude that we as citizens of this

country have for our veterans. Without their sacrifices and beneficence, the freedoms that Americans and many other people enjoy today would not be possible." For every rose purchased, 10% was donated to veterans' health care.

A dedicated group of volunteers maintains the rose garden led by employees Jerry Georgette and Elizabeth Foree and community volunteer Mamie Zimbelman. Additional help comes from The Peninsula Rose Society. Last January, 16 people spent a Saturday dormant pruning. Later, they planted 100 new

roses with the assistance of residents from the Menlo Park Homeless Vets program.

Gradually, engraved plaques are being added. To make a donation for a rose plant in memory of a loved one, contact Voluntary Services. We also need volunteers to help with maintenance. If you would like to help, please contact Jerry Georgette, RN, Lead Volunteer.



The founders and believers of the VA Palo Alto Rose Garden: Barbara Odum, Bud Zimbellman, Elizabeth Foree, Former Chaplain Ed Bastille, Mamie Zimbelman, Gene Resnick, and Jerry Georgette

A Promotion on Top of Progression

By Angie's BIRU Friends

Brett Miller, James Hancock, Jason Poole, Jay Wilkerson, AP Apineru, Seann Dishaw, Angel Gomez and John Potter. The story was part of their speech therapy. They were to interview another patient and write a story. Below is their story, told with much affection.



On June 30, 2006, in Aviano, Italy, Angie Stratz received her promotion to Staff Sergeant – while she was in a coma. Instead of pinning the stripes on her, Brigadier General Yates pinned them on her sister, Lori Pada.

If you witnessed this promotion, it would be unique because Angie's sister has no affiliation with the military, and she had flown in from the Philippines to be by Angie's side and receive her sister's rank from a Brigadier General.

Then on January 23, 2007, Angie Stratz received the promotion herself in a formal ceremony on the Polytrauma Unit by representatives of 129th Air Rescue Wing. Family, friends and patients were in attendance to witness Angie standing tall, with her parents beside her, being pinned in uniform by Air Force Colonel Albright of the 129th. With a full room of support, Angie expressed her gratitude to those who helped in her recovery and expressed her drive for her military future.

At 21, Angie was atop of the world. She was based in Aviano, Italy, with a brand new car, a new house, a faithful puppy named Ali, and was single to boot. Angie joined the Air Force at 17 years of age and always wanted to serve her country and travel. She enrolled in classes and fitted in to her now five year Air Force career. Things were going better than expected for Angie as her future was unfolding with smiles everyday.

Then on June 20, 2006, Angie was on her way home for lunch with "Ali" the puppy in the car. She was involved in an automobile accident that resulted in multiple rollovers and inflicted serious injuries.



Angie was airlifted from Saccile, Italy, to Landstuhl, Germany; to

Bethesda, Maryland, and then to the Polytrauma Center at Palo Alto. When Angie first arrived at Palo Alto she was unable to walk and function normally due to her traumatic brain injury. Her words were slurred and she couldn't stand on her own. Simple tasks caused a mountain of pain and frustration since she was unaware of her deficits.

After being a patient in the polytrauma and BIRU program, Angie is now able to run on the treadmill and function with the rest of her peers in the program. Some things for Angie are still cumbersome such as visual spatial abilities and full physical activities, but compared to day one, it is an enormous progression of events.

Angie plans on staying in the Air Force and continuing her education towards a master's degree in psychology. Angie is now an outpatient and lives with her sister and "Ali" her dog who also survived the accident. She still has a drive for helping others and a volunteering spirit that always has a smile.

When asked what things made the biggest impact on her recovery, Angie said she found strength in a fellow patient Tim Jeffers. She said his attitude was always bright considering his double amputee injuries, and he always had a smile regardless of the situation.

Angie said her mantra for recovery and her future is "life is like that of a photograph, you have to use the negative to develop the positive".

Social Workers Make a Difference in Veterans' Lives

March is Social Work Month, and the theme this year is “Hope + Health: Help Starts Here.” Help certainly does start here in VA, where every day VA social workers assist countless veterans and their families by providing the full range of psychosocial and supportive services, patient and family education, and liaison and referral to community agencies. VA is the nation's largest employer of master's prepared social workers, with more than 4,700 on staff in VHA facilities across the country. But we felt it would be better to let veterans tell the story about what Social Workers do in their own way. The following are heartfelt thank yous to our stellar Social Work Services.

“I can honestly say if it was not for the excellent case management I received from my social worker, Kim Wilder, I probably would not be here today. She has gone to bat for me every step of the way. If I needed to go to an appointment, they would take me. She helped me file for Social Security and got me into individual housing. She is always there to listen if I feel depressed or a smiling face on a bad day. I now have my own apt, TV, cable, phone and peace of mind, and I have started to volunteer as a peer counselor to other vets with mental disabilities. In closing, my social worker is heaven sent as far as I am concerned, and I would have been lost without her.”

– Jeffrey A. Lynn (formerly homeless veteran)

“Without Pat Noonan I'd still be lost! Now I can better my life and help others as she has for me.”

– Joe Menard

“The social workers have let me know that there are people out there that really care about the veteran especially those of us from the Vietnam War. We've been overlooked by the government and by everyone. They didn't want us there (Vietnam) and they didn't want us when we came back. Now we're getting help and it makes us feel so cared for. I am very grateful, especially to C.K. Maher who helped me get my teeth done.”

– Charles Morrow

“The social workers have really helped me with forms and contacts that can be very confusing in a bureaucracy. I've been dealing with health problems, and I just came out of the hospital so I've been trying to stabilize medically. I needed direction and help and Lindsay Celli, Social Work Intern helped me a lot. The VA system is very comprehensive, and it takes care of your physical and mental health. It's very convenient if you can take even a half-step forward.”

– Bobbie Sims

“I entered the women's PTSD program with both trepidation and the hope that I would finally learn to change and know happiness. Once I saw what there was to be gained, my trepidation turned to excitement. I found there were people, like social worker Gloria Grace, who truly cared about me even if I was unable to care for myself at the time. But growth is not always a pleasant experience. I began to see my weaknesses and fears, but I also began to see my strengths. I had not seen these before.”

– DJ Lehman

“Susan Hyder, an emergency room social worker, was one of the people who answered my call. I experienced an incredible sense of openness and willingness to respond from her. She was willing to talk with my parents and me at a moment's notice and showed compassion and patience with how she handled all of us, including my very resistant mother. She made a difference in life by helping others and that ripple effect of what she does each day is maybe not known to her, but is felt by others.”

– A Veteran

“My family and I live far away from our father and we were in a quandary regarding temporary recovery placement for him. Lisa Solomon, Med/Surg social worker, promptly responded to our questions and helped us with a place close by where we could see him. She was very expeditious since we needed a quick response to facilitate his recovery. At a very stressful time we found Lisa most pleasant and helpful in calling us, faxing the necessary paperwork and in following through with the details of the temporary placement. Her good nature is most commendable and we appreciate the help at a time when we were worried about recovery. Lisa's direct, responsive and pleasant nature alleviated both the worry regarding our Dad's medical needs, and the post-operative placement.”

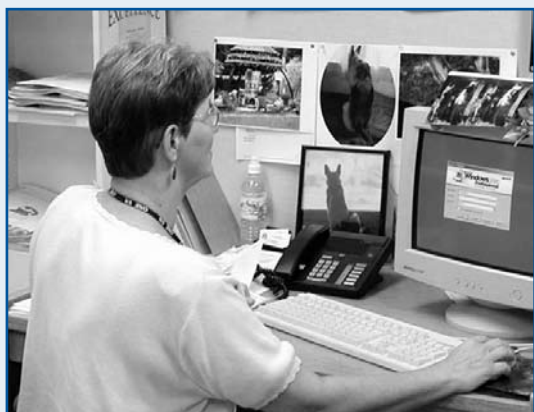
– A Grateful Veteran's Family

“When it comes to social workers, you don't know what you're missing if you don't take their suggestions. It took me a long time to learn that.”

– A veteran

National Professional Social Work Month

March 2007



Caring
Concerned
Committed

Menlo Park Mayor and Fire Chief Participate In Nursing Home Groundbreaking Ceremony

Under sunny skies and brisk winds, veterans, staff and invited dignitaries joined on March 27th for the groundbreaking ceremony of the new Gero-Psychiatric Nursing Home Care Unit at Menlo Park.

“This is an opportunity to celebrate a completion and a beginning,” said Lisa Freeman the event, director of the VAPAHCS. “We are finally bringing to completion years and years of planning and negotiating that exists long before any new project can happen. And we are celebrating the beginning of the construction for our new 120-bed Nursing Home Care project can happen. And we are celebrating the beginning of the construction for our new 120-bed Nursing Home Care Unit.”



Director Lisa Freeman

Also part of the ceremony and groundbreaking was the Mayor of Menlo Park Kelly Fergusson, Menlo Park Fire Chief Harold Schapelhouman and Menlo Park Councilmember John Boyle. Mayor Fergusson talked about the long-standing relationship between VA and the city and how proud the city was to be part of caring for veterans. Also speaking was Tony Jacobs, managing partner and project manager of Veteran Construction One and Mrs. Florence Ferris, wife of WWII veteran Lester Ferriss, a resident at the nursing home.



*Menlo Park Mayor
Kelly Fergusson*



The current Gero-Psych facility is 109 beds and in one year provides nearly 40,000 bed days of care. The new 80,000 square-foot facility will have 120 beds accommodating many more veterans. It will enable VA to provide more accessible, timely and efficient health care for veterans requiring specialized facilities and will designed to meet their unique needs. The building will feature large, spacious common areas and private and semi-private patient rooms. It is anticipated that construction will take from 18 months to two years.



*Henry Boulton, Food Service,
sings the National Anthem.*

“President Abraham Lincoln defined our mission in 1865,” said Ms. Freeman, “when he promised our nation’s veterans that America would ‘care for him who shall have borne the battle. . .’ Lincoln’s promise is our sacred trust and it is why we are here today.”

Dr. Liao is Chief of Urology



Dr. Joseph Liao is the new Chief of Urology at the VAPAHCS. He also serves as an assistant professor and co-director of Minimally Invasive Urologic Surgery at the Stanford Department of Urology. Dr. Liao graduated magna cum laude from Harvard College in 1993. After graduating from Stanford, Dr. Liao trained at UCLA where he completed his residency in 2003 and fellowship in endourology and minimally invasive surgery in 2006. Dr. Liao is looking forward to bringing the latest innovations in endoscopic, laparoscopic, and robotic-assisted surgical techniques to the Palo Alto VA.

Dr. Liao’s research interests focus on development of novel diagnostic and therapeutic modalities based on bionanotechnology. He has developed a point-of-care biosensor for rapid detection of urinary pathogens. He has received funding from the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering and the American Foundation of Urologic Disease. Dr. Liao will have an active laboratory at the Palo Alto VA and hopes to continue to foster interdisciplinary and translational research.

New Teleradiology Center for VHA



The Menlo Park Division will soon be the first site and home base for a national system of VA teleradiology that will provide remote interpretation of radiology studies for VAMCs throughout the country. Another teleradiology center will be located in Puerto Rico. The time zone difference and hours of operation between the two centers will provide service on a 24/7 basis. Based on projected workload, the center will employ a minimum of 10 radiologists and a maximum of 30.

Teleradiology is the electronic transmission of radiology images for interpretation or consultation at another location. Teleradiology is particularly well suited to the VA and may include the following benefits:

- Allow smaller VA facilities to send images to be read at a central location.
- Assist VA facilities that can not recruit radiologists.
- Reduce inefficient radiology staffing at low volume facilities.
- Allow interpretation of studies in off-hours and night coverage.
- Improve turnaround time for reports.
- Permit cross coverage with other federal agencies.
- Allow images to be sent to another facility for expert specialist consultation.
- Promote use of a common information structure that encompasses all VA facilities

Most important, the new center will increase productivity and address one of the most pressing problems in radiology, namely, a national shortage of radiologist.

Dr. Jason Lee Heads Up Vascular Surgery

Dr. Jason Lee graduated with honors from the California Institute of Technology in 1994, and finished medical school at the University of California-San Diego in 1998. He completed his general surgery residency at Harbor-UCLA in 2004. During his residency he spent one year working under the tutelage of Dr. Rodney White at the St. John's Cardiovascular Institute testing numerous endo-vascular devices in animal models. He is board-certified in general surgery and currently obtaining his board certification in vascular surgery.

Dr. Lee recently completed the Vascular Surgery Fellowship Program at Stanford University Medical Center. During his fellowship, he performed over 400 complex open operations and over 1000 catheter-based interventions. He has performed over 200 stent-graft operations for abdominal aortic aneurysms and 30 stent-graft operations for thoracic aortic pathology. His clinical interests are in minimally-invasive approaches to vascular disease, endovascular aneurysm repair, carotid artery stenting, aggressive treatments for claudication, and thoracic outlet decompression. He is looking forward to continuing the strong tradition of providing excellent vascular care to all patients at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System and collaborating with as many clinicians and researchers as possible.

Dr. Lee's research interests include outcomes of catheter-based interventions compared to open surgery, functional outcomes after

thoracic outlet decompression, imaging surveillance after endovascular aneurysm repair, the application of endovascular technologies to thoracic and thoracoabdominal aneurysms, and simulation-based learning. He will maintain an active role in the teaching program for the general surgery residents at Stanford--he is the program director for the 3-month mini endovascular fellowship, the associate program director for the 2-year vascular fellowship, and the clerkship director for the subinternship in vascular surgery at the medical school. Dr. Lee recently purchased an endovascular simulator that will be housed in the Goodman Simulation Center at Stanford to teach students, residents, fellows, and practicing physicians basic and advanced endovascular skills.

Dr. Lee is married to an urgent care physician, Dr. Maisie Fung, who works for Camino Medical Group in Sunnyvale and they have a 5 month old son, Justin. In his spare time he enjoys playing tennis, basketball, watching movies, and listening to music.



You Make a Difference!

Submitted by our veterans and their families



I'm a First Step patient, and **Laurie Berg** goes out of her way to make sure that my needs are met. She talks to me like a person and not as a patient. She has a great concern for us veterans and helps me to get the medications I need to feel right, so I can concentrate on the program and not on my medicine. We are lucky to have someone like her looking out for us.

– A Patient



For the past eighteen months, I have been treated at the hospice palliative care unit. A very special person in arranging my program is social worker **Sheila Kennedy** who has done so many things for me and my daughter. My primary doctor is **VJ Periyakoil** who heads up the program in a manner so outstanding it has changed my life. She has a way of making you feel like you are the only patient she has. My daughter and Dr. VJ have grown to know each other very well and together with Sheila Kennedy are responsible for all my progress. All the staff members on the unit are the most caring and dedicated people I have ever been associated with.

– A Patient



It was two years ago that the lights seemed to go out for my husband. He could not see the middle of faces and was legally blind. He could no longer drive, and he would stop accepting dinner invitations, even with friends. It seemed that he was losing his handle on life. I felt that I had lost my best friend, not to mention my husband of 41 years. At the **Western Blind Rehabilitation Center** in Palo Alto, **Lila Jaffray** and the wonderful instructors opened a whole new world to him and helped him regain his confidence. They showed him there is life beyond the darkness. I am so proud of him now and how he has entered the world again. Thank you so much!

- Wife of Patient

Ms. Genevieve Callahan, social worker for my mother, has facilitated any number of events to enhance the level of care my mother is currently receiving. When faced with a number of situations, which would frustrate the most experienced and patient of providers, she optimistically searches for a solution. I have been consistently impressed with Ms. Callahan's support and advocacy of my mother. I am exceedingly grateful that she is my mother's social worker, and I wanted to thank you for having such a remarkable individual on your team.

– Son of Patient

Josette Barfield is a very dedicated worker in Housekeeping. She's always ready with a smile every time we request her to clean our unit. She does her job very well and sees to it that everybody is satisfied upon completion of her assigned task. She's courteous and respectful to everyone and everyone likes her from nurse manager down to the patient.

– A Co-worker



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Submissions should be received by the 1st working day of the month to be included in upcoming issues. Due to space limitations, it is not possible to publish all submissions.

We welcome any comments, suggestions or story ideas you may have; please contact Kerri Childress (00K) at ext. 64888 or directly at 650-858-3925.

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